**EDUCATN 600: Essential Skills in Teaching and Learning (I)**

**End of Course Reflective Analysis**

Please complete this end of course reflection before the last class. Your response, which should synthesize rather than summarize your post-workshop reflections, should be approximately 3-4 double-spaced pages. You may choose to explore some or all of the following questions:

* What did you learn about teaching and learning in higher education?
* How will you apply what you learned to your teaching, now or in the future?
* Did you notice themes across the workshops, or find some topics especially applicable to your circumstances?
* What questions do you still have about teaching and learning? What would you like to know more about?

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**Your Reflection:**

I enrolled in this course with the goal of learning to become a better teacher. The workshop on "Research in Teaching and Learning" explained that good teachers focus on their own personal growth in teaching and continually refine their activities, and scholarly teachers use literature on teaching and learning to inform and enhance their practice. By this standard I came into this course as a good teacher on their way to becoming a scholarly teacher. The same workshop suggested moving beyond scholarly teaching by actively taking part in conducting research into teaching and learning. This inspired me when looking up concepts I learned in previous workshops in journals I identified as core to my area of study (i.e. Computer Science).

As part of the workshop on research in teaching, I identified a few key journals on education in my area of study (Computer Science): ACM Transaction of Computing Educations, IEEE Transactions on Learning Technologies and Innovation in teaching and Learning in Information and Computer Science. A very popular area of research was Active Learning. The workshop on active learning emphasized the empirically evidence showing effectiveness of active learning over traditional lecture styles, and I was indeed able to easily find often cited and large studies showing these results [[1]](#footnote-2). There are many different strategies for implementing active learning, when doing the workshop I choose the Socratic Questioning to explore. When implementing a Socratic Questioning style lecture, rather than leap from one question to another completely disjointed question, the teacher would focus on questions leading into a more complex understanding of the underlying concepts. Although I could not find studies with empirical evidence supporting Socratic Questioning, I was able to find a well-cited study that evaluated and showed effectiveness for debate style lectures over traditional lectures [[2]](#footnote-3) (similar to Socratic Questioning).

I however don't intend to restrict myself to only use Socratic Questioning as an active learning strategy. There are many factors that I will consider when implementing different strategies including the intended audience and the medium through which I'm presenting. During the workshop on Adult Learning Theories, I learned how a class of "adult" learner are worth distinguishing from other intended audiences. The Socratic Dialogue was invented (and is known to be more effective) [[3]](#footnote-4) on adult learners. Because of this I will be more likely to use guide a first year undergrad class than a later year or graduate course. I'll also need to consider the medium I'm presenting my material through. Since the pandemic, its seems like online learning will become more and more prevalent. In the workshop on facilitating online discussions, I learned different methods for developing online discussion sessions such as Starter-Wrapper and Save the last Word for me. Certain strategies (like Starter-Wrapper) can be easily fused with active learning strategies like Socratic Questioning.

A crucial aspect to online teaching is the use of technologies that make it possible. I learned about how different technologies can be used to aid the learning experience in the workshop on Educational Technologies. In my field (Computer Science) we use a cloud storage platform for collaborative project management called GitHub to store and develop open source software. I was interested in its current use in educational institutions, so I found a well cited study on its use emergence as a collaborative platform for education [[4]](#footnote-5). I plan to host my future courseware on there, where students can identify issues and suggest changes (as it is well designed too). I will also have students host their assignments on GitHub (as I have in the past). If students host assignments on GitHub (which can be made public and is often reviewed by potential employers) students will be more incentivized to continue contributing to their projects after they've been marked. This way marking and providing feedback will be geared towards improving a piece of work rather than seen as strictly criticism. I learned this in the workshop on Marking Efficiently and Effectively.

Throughout most of the workshops I took there was an emphasis on certain key concepts. Identifying intended learning outcomes (ILO's) and making sure they are clearly articulated to the learners was a big theme. Adult learners are more invested in learning when they now they can practically use what they learn, so focusing on the acquisition of practical skills/knowledge and making it clear what use they will be is important in any adult learning setting. In order to mark effectively you need clear ILO's, and when researching the effectiveness of different teaching and learning strategies you need ILO's as the goal that signifies effectiveness. The use of strategies evaluated through research into teaching and learning was also an important concept addressed throughout the workshops. Whether they were strategies for facilitating online discussions, or strategies for active learning or adult learning. Although I still don't know the effectiveness of a lot of the strategies presented in the workshops (as their were know empirical studies backing most of them), they were still valuable to learn about and I intend to continue learning new strategies with quality research backing their effectiveness, perhaps even conducting research of my own.

1. Miller, Cynthia J., and Michael J. Metz. "A comparison of professional-level faculty and student perceptions of active learning: its current use, effectiveness, and barriers." Advances in physiology education 38.3 (2014): 246-252. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Omelicheva, Mariya Y., and Olga Avdeyeva. "Teaching with lecture or debate? Testing the effectiveness of traditional versus active learning methods of instruction." PS: Political Science & Politics 41.3 (2008): 603-607. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Knowles, Malcolm S. "Andragogy: Adult learning theory in perspective." Community College Review 5.3 (1978): 9-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Zagalsky, Alexey, et al. "The emergence of github as a collaborative platform for education." Proceedings of the 18th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing. 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)